

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 01393 280111Z
ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9943

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1393

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, PINR, VN, SN

SUBJ: VIETNAMESE PILOT DEFECTORS -- HUMANITARIAN PAROLE

AUTHORIZATION TO ENTER U.S.

REF: A. SINGAPORE 1374, B. STATE 75418 C. SINGAPORE 1368

1. IN MARCH 27 CONVERSATION WITH DCM, MFA POLITICAL DIVISION DEPUTY DIRECTOR MUSHAHID ALI EXPRESSED GOS RELIEF THAT VIETNAMESE PILOT DEFECTORS INCIDENT HAD BEEN HANDLED SO EXPEDITIOUSLY AND GRATITUDE THAT USG HAD MOVED SO PROMPTLY TO "RESETTLE" THE DEFECTORS.

2. HE FORESAW NO SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE TO GOS-SVN RELATIONS. ALL THAT REMAINED, HE SAID, WAS FOR SRV TO ARRANGE RECOVERY OF ITS AIRCRAFT. "WE HOPE THAT THEY WILL BE IN A RATHER SHEEPISH MOOD THIS TIME RATHER THAN STORMING IN", HE ADDED.

3. EDITORIAL IN MARCH 27 STRAITS TIMES ALSO EXPRESSED PLEASURE OVER SPEED WITH WHICH U.S. ACCEPTED DEFECTING PILOTS. TEXT OF LEAD PARAGRAPH OF THIS EDITORIAL AS FOLLOWS:

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QUOTE. FORTUNATELY THE AFFAIR OF THE TWO STRAYING VIETNAMESE PILOTS APPEARS TO HAVE ENDED WELL FOR SINGAPORE. THE SPEED AT WHICH THEIR APPLICATIONS TO BE "RESETTLED" IN THE UNITED STATES WERE PROCESSED CERTAINLY HELPED, FOR IT HARDLY GAVE ANY TIME

FOR AN OFFICIAL STORM TO GET STARTED.
ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH COULD HAVE MADE FOR
A LESS TENSE SITUATION IS THAT NO POLITICAL
ASYLUM WAS SOUGHT, AND THE WHOLE THING WAS
RUSHED THROUGH AS "RESETTLEMENT" CASES --
WHAT A COMFORTING SINGAPOREAN RING THE TERM
HAS -- BEFORE ANY TALK OF DEFECTIONS OR
REFUGEES COULD ARISE. THIS INCIDENT UNDOUBTEDLY
WILL HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE, AN
ITS HANDLING MERITS CLOSER STUDY BY COUN-
TRIES IN A DILEMMA SIMILAR TO SINGAPORE'S.
WHATEVER THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT MAY
NOW SAY OR DO, THE PAIR ARE NO LONGER IN
THE REPUBLIC'S HANDS, AND THE SOLUTION IS
A FAIT ACCOMPLI. UNQUOTE.

4. REMAINDER OF STRAITS TIMES EDITORIAL NOTED THAT
THERE WERE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS INCIDENT,
MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH WAS HOW TO PREVENT FUTURE
INCIDENTS OF THIS NATURE FROM BECOMING A HAZARD TO
TRAFFIC AT PAYA LEBAR AIRPORT. EDITORIAL ALSO NOTED
THAT THE VIETNAMESE AIRCRAFT APPARENTLY WAS REFUELED
ENROUTE AND COMMENTED THAT "IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A
NEIGHBORLY COOPERATIVE GESTURE IN THE BEST ASEAN TRA-
DITION IF STATES COULD INFORM EACH OTHER ABOUT SUCH
EVENTS INSTEAD OF QUICKLY TRYING TO PASS THE BUCK". IT
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MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA, EDITORIAL CONCLUDED, "IF ASEAN
MEMBERS ADOPT A COMMON APPROACH TO THESE PROBLEMS".
HOLDRIDGE

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